

SAINT PAUL DISTRICT COUNCILS

2013 ANNUAL REPORT



Bringing community together over food and flowers at the ground-breaking of the new Summit Hill Community Garden.

During 2013, Saint Paul District Councils worked with more than **2,000 volunteers** on behalf of Saint Paul neighborhoods, including more than **1,000 board and committee members** • Fielded more than **14,000 resident requests** • Served more than **5,000 neighbors** visiting district council offices • Organized and maintained nearly **400 block clubs** • Made recommendations to the city on more than **200 zoning and licensing issues** • Involved more than **600 volunteers** in neighborhood cleanups that collected **650 tons of household waste** from **3,672 residents** • Participated in parades and festivals attended by nearly **24,000 people** • Kept **10,000 subscribers** current on neighborhood issues and events via email • Mailed regular updates about neighborhood issues and events to more than **90,000 residents**

About District Councils

Saint Paul's 17 neighborhood groups or district councils have been working more than 35 years to make a positive difference through community involvement. As independent nonprofit organizations, district councils ensure community participation in Saint Paul's planning and decision making processes.

Each district council provides advisory recommendations to city officials on physical, economic, and social development issues. District councils also identify neighborhood needs, initiate community programs, and recruit and nurture neighborhood leaders and volunteers.

Inside the 2013 Annual Report

The next pages provide information on district councils' work in 2013 on the issues of community building, community gardens, neighborhood planning and outreach. Also highlighted are examples of district council work in-depth:

Neighborhoods Working Together on Pedestrian Safety
(Districts 14 and 16)

Project Increases Access to Healthy Food for All West Siders
(District 3)

Transit Equity Project Engages Diverse Voices of the Eastside
(Districts 1, 2, 4, and 5)

Community Building



District councils focus on community building by creating social networks and supporting leadership and initiative by individuals and groups in their neighborhoods:

District 1 Community Council and its partners held a community-wide National Night Out event that drew over 600 people. One of the highlights was the distribution of 800 pounds of fresh produce to neighbors, courtesy of the Hmong congregation of Holy Apostles Church.

District 2 Community Council worked with a local school to add playground equipment and collected supplies for area schools.

Frogtown Neighborhood Association (District 7) sponsored “Lot Squats” last summer. The group held Friday office hours on a different vacant lot each week and were joined by more than 100 community members envisioning possibilities for these neighborhood spaces.

Union Park District Council (District 13) sponsored “Ice Cream, Peanut Butter & Jam”, a festival in Merriam Park, with music and free Izzy’s ice cream. Two thousand residents, businesses and artists came to celebrate the wonderful offerings of the neighborhood.

Community Gardens and Gardening



Community gardens provide access to fresh produce, enhance urban green space, promote exercise, improve diets and build relationships in diverse communities:

District 10 Como Community Council hosted a garden tour, attended by 200 community members. The tour included rain gardens, native plant gardens, a green roof, a mini-orchard, hillside gardens, prairie gardens, pollinator gardens and boulevard gardens.

Hamline Midway Coalition (District 11) supported establishment of the new Tatum Park Community Garden.

St. Anthony Park Community Council (District 12) worked with Ramsey County to ensure that its 96-plot community garden maintained its tax exempt status to stay affordable.

Summit Hill Association (District 16) installed a 50+-plot community garden in Linwood Park. The garden hosted many events, including a first annual Harvest Celebration. Garden produce was donated to food shelves and to seniors via the Block Nurse program.

Neighborhoods Working Together on Pedestrian Safety

By Callie Recknagel, Community Organizer, Macalester Groveland Community Council



In the last three years, four pedestrians have been killed or seriously injured on Grand Avenue, there have been countless crashes and near misses throughout the city, and pedestrian fatalities have increased across the state. In response, concerned neighbors have focused on making the streets safer for pedestrians. The Grand Avenue Business Association, the Macalester-Groveland Community Council (D14), and the Summit Hill Association (D16) partnered in a request for street improvements to decrease speeds and increase pedestrian safety on Grand Avenue.

According to the State of Minnesota’s Crosswalk Law, every intersection is a crosswalk, whether it’s marked or unmarked, but drivers rarely stop for people crossing the street. So, this spring, volunteers developed St. Paul Walks, a citywide pedestrian safety campaign. Saint Paul Smart Trips, Transit for Livable Communities, city representatives, residents, and District Council staff worked together and in the first two months of the campaign, over 500 people signed the pledge to “Stop for Pedestrians.”

Next year, St. Paul Walks will develop a toolkit for community organizations and continue to raise awareness for pedestrian safety. Knowing that everyone is a pedestrian at some point during their day - once they leave their car, bike, or bus - our goal is to make the streets safer for all and provide a voice for pedestrians. Sign the pledge and learn more at www.stpaulwalks.org!

Neighborhood Planning



Dayton's Bluff Community Council (District 4) is partnering with the Latino Economic Development Center to develop the East Side Enterprise Center as a catalyst for business growth across the many east side cultures and ethnicities. The center will build the capacity of existing businesses and attract new businesses.

District 6 Planning Council worked with other partners to publish a history of Willow Reserve and began work on a natural resource plan for a North End wetland area.

Macalester Groveland Community Council (District 14) partnered with the UMN Center for Urban and Regional Affairs and the City of Saint Paul to create a helpful 'how to' guide for neighborhood planning, "Road to the Community Plan", which will guide communities as they undertake a community plan process. The road map was created by CURA student researcher Andrew Tran and a number of district councils participated in reviewing it.

Outreach



District councils inform and connect with people in a variety of ways, including door knocking, town hall meetings, electronic and print newsletters and social media. Here are a few examples:

Payne Phalen District 5 Planning Council provided outreach to 300 families as part of the Railroad Island Green Sweep. The district provided residents with resources, information and community notification in advance of city enforcement of housing and land use codes.

Highland District Council (District 15) created a new communications plan greatly expanding its methods of community outreach to include Facebook and E-Democracy. The district council also redesigned its web site and provided welcome packets to new residents.

Project Increases Access to Healthy Food for All West Siders

By Christine Shyne, Executive Director, West Side Community Organization (WSCO)



In the spring of 2013, West Side Community Organization (WSCO - District 3) started working with BlueCross BlueShield to start the West Side Food Access Project. The goals: 1) Increase access to healthy, fresh, culturally appropriate food for low income rental households and community members of color; 2) expand opportunities to grow and produce food at the local level, and 3) create sustainable opportunities to purchase healthy food in the neighborhood.

WSCO has been partnering with many to bring policy and systems changes including:

- The West Side Farmer's Market operated Saturday mornings June to October. Over 1,500 attended and the market averaged 7-10 vendors a week selling locally grown vegetables, organic poultry, and tasty baked goods and jams. The West Side Farmers Market closed with a wonderful harvest party, celebrating its first season and many partnerships including WSCO.
- Project partner Ce Tempoxcalli (a culturally-focused nonprofit that builds healthy communities by revitalizing indigenous cultural knowledge) has been engaging West Side constituents around food access, connecting one-on-one with community members to find out what they want and need in a West Side food system.
- Project partner NeDA (Neighborhood Development Alliance), has worked with local resident experts to identify land for community food production in the neighborhood.

Year two goals include policies on food production at Public Housing Authority and low income housing, building access and sustainability for the Farmer's Market, and seeking assistance to allocate land for food production on the West Side. In addition to this work, WSCO will be creating a coalition including all West Side organizations working on food justice issues.

Transit Equity Project Engages Diverse Voices of the Eastside

by Betsy Leach, Executive Director, District 1 Community Council



Saint Paul's eastside represents a full third of Saint Paul's total population. Population in the four eastside district councils (Districts 1 and 2, Dayton's Bluff and Payne Phalen) includes 56% of the city's Asian population, 46% of its Hispanic/Latino population, 35% of its Black population and less than 1/4 of its White population. As a whole, the eastside, and each individual eastside district council, has a higher percentage of youth than the city as a whole, and a significantly higher percentage of people living below 200 percent of the poverty line. The eastside epitomizes diversity, and, with these dimensions of diversity, is home to populations that are heavily transit-dependent.

And yet, the eastside has fewer transit lines, almost no bicycle facilities, and still has significant areas that lack walkability. Few recent transportation dollars have been spent on the eastside.

The four eastside district councils, the Eastside Business Association, and the Engage Eastside partners were jointly awarded a grant from Ramsey County to plan for transit. The focus was on reaching community members who traditionally have been left out of transportation decisions, to find out what was known about future transit projects and what members wanted in their community for transit services.

The district councils hired ten organizers from communities of color, and worked with the Organizing Apprenticeship Project to train them. The organizers surveyed eastside residents of color about their transit needs as well as working to identify potential leaders in the community who can continue to be the voice of the eastside in future transit and other transportation decisions. Wilder Research designed the survey and analyzed the data that were collected. The Wilder Research Group reviewed the previous, limited, work done to identify eastside transit issues and found significant gaps in our understanding of those issues. Such collaboration represents the future of transit planning.

For more information: Contact Diane Wanner, District Council Coordinator, Saint Paul City Council Research Office at 651-266-8572 or email her at Diane.Wanner@ci.stpaul.mn.us.

There are many ways you can get involved in your community through working with your district council. Join a committee, work on an event, help with outreach - or tell us what you would like to do! Contact your district council for more information. Visit www.stpaul.gov/districtcouncil.

City of Saint Paul Wards and District Councils

